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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON BOTANY

The first work of this Committee was to make a census of competent investigators and of the problems under way. Botanists were also asked to suggest additional problems bearing upon public welfare, and numerous suggestions were received. In the main these are long-time problems, very important to continue, but not expected to yield immediate practical results.

When the United States entered the war, a large number of emergency problems arose. The larger number of these had to do with the available sources of plant materials and products. Many of them were questions asking for information, rather than problems needing investigation. Dr. E. M. East, a member of the Committee, was asked to take charge of this phase of the work. Finally it seemed best to establish a Special Committee on Raw Products, with Dr. East as Chairman, which is in close co-operation with the Committee on Botany. The Commercial Museum of Philadelphia, with its unusual facilities as a source of information in reference to raw products, is also working in co-operation with this Special Committee.

The number and nature of the questions in reference to forest materials and products soon made it evident that this group of problems should be provided for in a special way, and accordingly Prof. Irving W. Bailey of the Bussey Institution was asked to take charge of this phase of the work. These problems involve such an overlapping of Botany and Forestry, and many of them are of such practical importance that it has been recommended that a Sub-Committee on Forestry be organized, which shall bring into close co-operation the Forestry Service and the Committee on Botany.

Problems Undertaken.—Among the emergency problems under way, the following have progressed far enough to be encouraging.

1. Dehydration of vegetables. A method to preserve flavor.
2. Dehydration of fruits. A method being developed chiefly in the western fruit area as a measure of conservation.
3. Sources of rubber. A problem well toward solution.
4. Improvement of sugar beets. A breeding problem undertaken by several investigators and well advanced.
5. Disease-resistant cereals. A long-time problem but advanced far enough to expect that some disease-resistant strains will soon be available.
6. Drought-resistant cereals, especially corn and sorghum.
7. Native drug plants. Information in reference to native plants from which needed drugs may be obtained is in charge of Dr. Henry Kraemer of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. A great many medicinal plants have been suggested, but comparatively few have been tested.
8. A substitute for cotton in the manufacture of explosives. It is necessary for this substitute to consist of nearly pure cellulose, and to be easily obtainable in vast quantities.

9. The food reserves in certain plants.

Co-operation.—Co-operative relations have been established with the Committee on Agriculture of the National Research Council, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Botanical Division of the Carnegie Institution, research laboratories of universities, agricultural experiment stations, botanic gardens, the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association, the Cereal Conference, and the Association of Seedsmen. The purpose of this co-operation is the exchange of information in reference to problems under way, and in reference to pressing problems that have been encountered; and also the sharing of facilities for investigation. It should be said that information in reference to problems under way is not intended as a notice of preemption, the feeling being that several attacks upon a problem may bring speedier results.

Additional Activities.—Efforts are being made to:

1. Effect contact with manufacturers who may need information as to plant materials and products, and who may not know the most speedy way of obtaining it.
2. Effect contact with farmers so that they may receive and apply the information and advice that is accumulating.
3. Make some of the results commercially available, without specially favoring any commercial organization. Some of these results would ordinarily involve patents or trade secrets.

JOHN M. COULTER, *Chairman.*

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The sixteenth meeting of the Executive Committee was held at the offices of the Council in New York City, April 4, 1917. Messrs. Chittenden, Dunn, Pupin, and the Secretary were present.

The Secretary announced the appointment of Mr. Lewis B. Stillwell to the Council. It was voted that Mr. Stillwell be appointed a member of the Engineering Committee.

The Secretary also announced the appointment of Dr. Joseph S. Ames and of Dr. Hollis Godfrey to the Council; the resignation of Dr. Hale as Chairman of the Committee on Research in Educational Institutions, and the acceptance by Dr. Chittenden of that chairmanship.

Mr. Dunn reported a gift of five thousand dollars from Mr. Edward D. Adams to the Engineering Foundation.

Dr. Chittenden presented a letter from certain members of the staff of the Sheffield Scientific School, bringing up several very practical questions on the metallurgy of brass, particularly for the use of the Army and Navy. After discussion, the letter was referred to the Secretary, to take the matter up with General Crozier, and possibly with others.